

# U. S. VIEWS ON NAVAL ARMS CONTROL

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19 ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) This paper presented at the Swedish Institute for International Affairs Conference on Arms Control at Sea, Stockholm, Sweden on 11, 12 December 1989. It addresses US thinking on naval arms control and maritime strategy. It discusses current thinking regarding the control of sea-based strategic nuclear systems, sea-launched cruise missiles and general purpose naval forces. For each it presents what the US and foreign counterparts have already agreed to in recent or ongoing negotiations and also lays out the US viewpoint on issues that have yet to be agreed upon in negotiating fora. The paper also summarizes recent developments in the US Navy's thinking about maritime strategy in a discussion of general purpose naval forces.					
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US VIEWS ON NAVAL ARMS CONTROL

by

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*The interpretations of US Government views presented in this paper  
are strictly those of the author.*

I have been asked to speak about US thinking on naval arms control and on maritime strategy. I am not here as an official spokesman for the US Government, but I can give you *my interpretation of US Government views*. I will discuss current thinking concerning the control of sea-based strategic nuclear systems, of sea-launched cruise missiles, and of general purpose naval forces. For each I will present what the US and its foreign counterparts have already agreed to in recent or ongoing negotiations and also lay out the US viewpoint on issues that have yet to be agreed upon in negotiating fora. I will summarize recent developments in the US Navy's thinking about maritime strategy in the discussion on general purpose naval forces.

#### ARMS CONTROL AND SEA-BASED STRATEGIC FORCES

In the Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START) Washington and Moscow have already agreed to provisions having direct or indirect impact on naval nuclear forces. Absent changes which could still occur since the talks should continue for some time, the most relevant provisions call on each side to have a maximum of 1600 strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (defined as ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers), a limit of 6000 nuclear charges on these vehicles (as per a specified set of counting rules), a sub-limit of 4900 charges on land and sea-based ballistic missiles, a 50% reduction in the aggregate throwweight of ballistic missiles, specified maximum numbers of warheads on individual types of deployed missiles, and a quota of on-site inspections to verify that

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deployed missiles contain no more than the specified maximum of warheads.

Possibly the most significant naval impact of these provisions will be reductions in the sea-based deterrent forces of both nuclear superpowers. The latest *Military Balance* credits the USA with 35 SSBNs, 608 SLBM launch tubes, and a total of 6208 warheads (as per SALT counting rules) if all tubes were readied for launch. It is generally estimated that a START Treaty could well result in roughly a 50% decrease in these totals.<sup>1</sup> By comparison, the consequence should be more significant for the USSR with its 62 accountable submarines, 942 launchers, and 3806 warheads. Depending on submarine and missile loadouts, SSBN and launcher numbers could drop as much as 75% or so and warheads by nearly 60%. This more drastic impact on Moscow's inventory reflects the expectation that it would choose to place two-thirds of its allowed ballistic missile warheads on land-based launchers in contrast to the US, which is expected to place two-thirds or more on sea-based missiles.

Among the issues yet to be resolved is whether there will be a further missile warhead sublimit. Still on the table in Geneva is the Soviet proposition that there be a sublimit on SLBM warheads of 3300. This was offered as a

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1. The number of SSBNs and SLBMs need not drop as drastically if the US chooses to place fewer than the maximum number of warheads allowed on individual missiles and fewer missiles per boat than each is presently capable of carrying.

counter to a US proposal for an equal ceiling on ICBM warheads--the US argument being that this sublimit is warranted since, compared to SLBMs or bombers, ICBMs have greater destabilizing, first-strike potential by virtue of alert rate possibilities and speedier and more reliable communications. The US rejects an SLBM subceiling partly because it "contradicts [its] view that ICBM are more destabilizing than SLBM,"<sup>2</sup> and partly because it would narrow US flexibility in deploying SLBMs. Since a 3300 SLBM sublimit, however, closely approaches what some knowledgeable observers believe the US might well have in a post-START force--e.g., Slocombe foresees a START total of 3424 warheads,<sup>3</sup> some basis for compromise may exist after all in view of Soviet willingness to accept the ICBM ceiling. It seems difficult to imagine that a START agreement would falter over this issue.

In what can be regarded as a confidence-building measure at the strategic level, a US and Soviet agreement was reached in 1988 calling for prior notification of ballistic missile launches. Affecting SLBMs as well as their land-based counterparts, it calls for 24 hour advanced notification.

The issue of SLBM launches per se came up at the Baker and Shevardnadze meeting in Wyoming in September 1989.

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2. Robert Einhorn, "The Emerging START Agreement," *Survival*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (September/October 1988), p., 393.

3. Walter Slocombe, "Force Posture Consequences of the START Treaty," *Survival* Vol. 30, No. 5 (September/October 1988), p. 405.

After the meeting, it was revealed that American officials had proposed a series of measures "which should be carried out in advance of a [START] treaty".<sup>4</sup> These included a ban on the testing of SLBMs flying a low trajectory.

Washington's long-standing concern here is that Soviet SSBNs firing from close to the US homeland could carry out short-range and thus short time-of-flight surprise attacks that "could significantly reduce US warning and response time".<sup>5</sup>

#### ARMS CONTROL AND SEA-LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILES

The Baker-Shevardnadze meeting also dealt with an issue which could have derailed a START agreement. This was the question of limiting sea-launched cruise missiles. The American and Soviet foreign ministers agreed to "shifting the issue of sea-launched cruise missiles from the body of START to a side agreement".<sup>6</sup> They thereby set aside temporarily one of the major points of contention in the START negotiations.

In both the SALT and the START fora Moscow has sought, and Washington has opposed, limits on the deployment of SLCMs. With its Tomahawk program the United States is ahead of the Soviets both in the quality of its long-range, land-attack SLCM technology and in the quantity of missiles

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4. Thomas L. Friedman, "Baker and Shevardnadze Agree to Arms Inspections in Principle," *The New York Times*, 23 September 1989, p. 4.

5. Brent Scowcroft and R. James Woolsey, American Agenda Report to President-elect Bush on Defense and Arms Control Policy, 1988, p. 3.

6. Don Oberdorfer, "Mountain Air Appears To Invigorate US Relationship with the Soviet Union," *Washington Post*, 25 September 1989, p.20.

deployed. It is not known how many such missiles the USSR will have, but the US Navy plans to purchase nearly 4000 missiles of which 758 would be nuclear-armed. About 200 American surface ships and submarines will eventually carry the weapon.

Notwithstanding its opposition to constraints on SLCM deployments, the US did agree with the USSR at the December 1987 Washington summit that long-range nuclear SLCMs should be limited by a START treaty and that allowed SLCMs should not be counted against the 6000 warhead and 1600 delivery vehicles ceilings mentioned above. Both sides also committed themselves to seek mutually acceptable methods, to include cooperative measures, on-site inspection, and "National Technical Means", to verify compliance.

The United States has further proposed that until a plan for effective verification is agreed upon, both sides only make non-binding declarations as to the number of nuclear SLCMs each possesses. In contrast, Moscow has suggested that each nation restrict itself to 400 nuclear SLCMs on two classes of submarines and one class of surface ship and 600 conventional missiles on specified categories of ships. Soviet negotiators have subsequently also indicated that one overall limit of 1000 missiles would be acceptable. Under that scheme each party would have full freedom to determine the proportion of nuclear and conventionally-armed variants.



Several reasons underlie the US's opposition to SLCM constraints. One is that the missile constitutes a new weapon which could prove highly useful not only in a general war but also in regional crises throughout the world. The weapon's stealth makes it difficult to defend against and its potential for high accuracy opens up possibilities for discriminate use. US Navy leaders see the conventionally-armed variant as an "unmatchable force multiplier" when employed in concert with carrier based aircraft (the SLCMs e.g., being used to suppress enemy air defenses).<sup>7</sup> When appropriate it can also substitute for manned aircraft in order to obviate the possibility of aviator losses.

Determination to guarantee unfettered deployment of the conventional version partly undergirds the American view that the nuclear variant should remain unfettered as well in the absence of effective, mutually-agreed upon verification procedures. The reason, say US officials, is that it may be impossible with present technology to distinguish between conventional and nuclear deployed missiles without intrusive shipboard inspection, which they adamantly oppose for fear of compromising important secrets. They see it as a great mistake to sacrifice a promising conventional capability for the sake of nuclear arms control, particularly since they do not regard the projected American nuclear SLCM arsenal (and

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7. "Statement of Vice Admiral Charles R. Larson, US Navy, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans, Policy and Operations) Before the Seapower Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on Naval Arms Control," 27 April 1989, p. 11.

presumably that of the USSR as well) as large enough to raise concerns about circumventing any START regime.

The official American view goes further to make the case that (some) nuclear SLCMs ought to be allowed. One reason is that widely dispersed nuclear SLCMs possess deterrent value by "severely complicat[ing] Soviet planning and rais[ing] the risk and uncertainty in making a decision to start a war."<sup>8</sup> Another reason is that they enhance the flexible response capability of theater commanders in a way which avoids problems of land basing.

Without specifically singling out any variant, the US CNO dwelt at some length on the value of SLCMs in a speech he gave to a Soviet naval audience in Leningrad this past October [i.e., of 1989]. He focussed in particular on the missile's potential to complicate the Soviet Navy's targeting efforts which otherwise would be concentrated against aircraft carriers. Because the Soviet Navy had built up over a period of twenty years an anti-surface warfare capability specifically directed at eliminating aircraft carriers, "we were left," he said, "with no option but to develop a capability [i.e., SLCMs] to disperse the surface and land strike assets that were previously concentrated only in our manned aircraft aboard carriers."<sup>9</sup> Thus, he went on to conclude: "from my perspective, [SLCM] limits...would again focus the US Navy's seaborne strike

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8. *Ibid.*

9. "Remarks by Adm. C.A.H. Trost, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, [to the] Leningrad Naval School, USSR, Thursday, 12 October 1989," p. 6.

capability, and your [anti-ship] cruise missiles, squarely on our aircraft carriers. This poses unacceptable risks to our ships...."

A related argument, though not mentioned by CNO, is that nuclear SLCM can deter or, if necessary, respond to sub-strategic or tactical nuclear attacks against US Navy ships, for it provides the US with a comparable retaliatory /reprisal capability, one below the level of central nuclear systems. Any use of the latter (SLBMs, ICBMs, or strategic bombers) in response could be dangerously escalatory.

A sub-issue within the overall SLCM question is Moscow's proposal that allowed SLCM be deployed only on specific types or classes of ships and submarines. This proposal runs directly against the long-standing American policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons aboard its naval ships. This policy not only helps insure against having specific ships singled out for attack in the event of hostilities, but it also addresses the political sensitivities of nations in whose ports US naval ships may call.

Finally, though removed from the START arena, SLCMs remains on the superpower arms control agenda. In his Leningrad speech Admiral Trost stated that he "strongly opposed any negotiations that would impose undue restrictions on cruise missiles at sea",<sup>10</sup> implying that some restrictions might be acceptable to the Navy. Earlier

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10. *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

in the year the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Plans, Policy and Operations, Vice Admiral Charles Larson, usefully summarized the fundamental principles of the "US position":

- it is unacceptable to place limits on conventional SLCM;
- it is unacceptable to designate particular classes of warships as carriers of nuclear armed SLCM;
- it is unacceptable to permit on-site inspection of US naval forces not subject to the START agreement.<sup>11</sup>

Consistent with the position accepted by the US in December 1987 at the Washington summit, these principles leave open the possibility of limits on nuclear SLCMs if a non-intrusive verification system can be agreed upon and if the "neither confirm, nor deny" policy is not jeopardized.

#### ARMS CONTROL AND GENERAL PURPOSE NAVAL FORCES

It is no secret that the United States has been and remains generally unenthusiastic about conventional naval arms control proposals, regardless of whether they are globally or regionally oriented. At a news conference in May 1988, President Reagan stated that "East and West have traditionally agreed to omit naval forces from conventional arms control negotiations in Europe....We continue to believe this is the best course."<sup>12</sup> The next October the Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency told the UN General Assembly First Committee that the "firm

11. Larson, *op. cit.* at note 7, pp. 12-13.

12. White House News Conference, 26 May 1988. I am indebted to James Lacy of the RAND Corporation for this citation.

position of the United States" was that it "cannot agree to any arms limitations or additional constraints on its naval activities."<sup>13</sup> Prior to the December 1989 Malta summit, as speculation arose that President Gorbachev would propose naval arms measures, Bush administration officials went out of their way to emphasize, as one spokesman put it, that "the United States is not going to be very forthcoming on naval arms control".<sup>14</sup> How does one explain this strong reluctance?

In short, there is simply no sense in official circles, including the White House, that reductions or constraints on naval forces are desirable, much less necessary. The same people willing to accept or pushing for negotiations on strategic nuclear weapons or on conventional forces in continental Europe do not view prospective naval constraints in the same light. Strategic nuclear weapons, because they could ultimately lead to the destruction of one's own society, are generally not seen as having great practical utility other than to deter. Warsaw Pact land-based force are viewed as destabilising for their ability to take and hold Western European territories; hence, mutually-agreed upon NATO-Pact reductions or Europe-wide confidence-building measures which reduce that threat are viewed very positively

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13. "Speech of William Burns, Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, 18 October 1988." I am indebted to Richard Fieldhouse for this citation.

14. As quoted in Charles W. Corddry, "Gorbachev Likely To Propose Naval Reductions at Summit, US Officials Say," Baltimore Sun, 22 November 1989, p. 4.

indeed. For the most part, furthermore, both strategic and European land-based conventional forces are overwhelmingly viewed in a US-Soviet context. As relations with Moscow improve, there is an increase in the sense that negotiated cutbacks on these forces are not only acceptable but desirable.

Naval forces are viewed in a different light. It is widely accepted that: they do not have the destructive potential of strategic nuclear forces; they do not take and hold territory; they have great practical utility as evidenced by their repeated use (far more than any other US DoD component) in peacetime contingencies; and their utility is global in context and as often as not their peacetime contingency employment is not directly connected to what Soviet forces are doing. Indeed one can predict that the perceived relevance of naval forces will increase consistent with changes in strategic requirements. One change is increased emphasis on preparing for low intensity conflicts. A second is increased emphasis on insuring the integrity of sea lines to Europe in order to be able to reinforce NATO if necessary after American forces had been withdrawn as a result of the CFE negotiations.

For all the above reasons, American Government officials have said very little publicly about proposals for regulating the development or deployment of general purpose naval forces. Not surprisingly, high-level US naval officers have generally been the most outspoken, and, not

surprisingly, they approach the topic reluctantly. Their concern is that naval arms control would limit the Navy's capability to protect US and allied interests. For example, speaking at an international gathering of naval officers at the Naval War College on 23 October 1989, Admiral Trost stated:

...while we may find we have differing views on certain aspects of naval arms control, I would suggest that this is a period in which prudence should prevail....We must think...to the ultimate effects of these proposals, if accepted, and ask ourselves, "Would this result in a more stable, secure world for ourselves and our friends?"<sup>15</sup>

The Navy's framework for addressing naval arms control is essentially the same one employed to make the case for naval forces.<sup>16</sup> The starting point is that the United States is an island nation dependent upon the seas to insure its economic survival. Its security interests are global, being allied with over 40 nations, only two of which are contiguous to its borders. Its major planning contingency remains that of a war in Europe, and while naval forces cannot win a European war, they can cause its loss if they

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15. Admiral C.A.H. Trost, "Alliances Work!", Speech Delivered at the Tenth International Seapower Symposium, US Naval War College, Newport, RI, 23 October 1989, p. 28

16. For a recent published statement, see Admiral C.A.H. Trost, "A Maritime Nation, US Needs Strong Navy," ROA National Security Report, Vol. 7, No. 10 (October 1989), pp. 8-9.

do not insure the resupply and reinforcement of NATO's forces.

In contrast, the argument goes, the USSR's advocacy of naval arms control is readily understandable. It is a continental power not dependent upon international maritime trade for economic survival. Located as it is in the center of Eurasia, land lines of communication can link it not only to many trading partners but also to its most important security allies. If the CFE talks succeed, its geographic proximity to Western Europe will become even more important in the event of some future major European crisis which requires both NATO and the Warsaw Pact to reinforce their respective positions. American reinforcements will still have to traverse the seas, but more now would probably have to make the journey. That geographic advantage will never go away. Only the degree of its significance can change.

American naval leaders see underlying purposes to Soviet willingness to offer naval arms control proposals. One is to create dissension in the West through diplomacy and propaganda with proposals (such as for nuclear free zones; proposals to limit large naval exercises) which have appeal to segments of the European and Asian publics. A second is to negate the West's maritime advantages by attempting to get the West to limit the size or makeup of its naval forces or how and when those forces can deploy. By asking for advance notification of movements, by establishing zones closed to certain forces (e.g., ASW-free



zones, nuclear-free zones) or zones within which certain forces (such as SSBNs) must remain, they "would ... significantly reduce the complexities which Soviet planners must resolve as they consider future military operations, either in the context of global war or in support of national wars of liberation."<sup>17</sup> By suggesting that the United States "retire or place in storage half of our aircraft carriers in return for your retirement of about one hundred of your submarines,"<sup>18</sup> it aims to get the US to take out of service centrally-critical front line forces while the Soviet Navy decommissions obsolete submarines which it will have to pay off soon anyway. Indeed, all such proposals are viewed as attempts to minimize the impact which budgetary problems may have on the size and makeup of Moscow's Navy.

To a Russian audience the US CNO characterized such proposals as

attempts to abrogate commonly accepted international law with respect to freedom of the high seas. [They] would result in the inability of my navy to protect the global interests of the United States or to deter aggression. Naval forces must be free to operate when and where deterrent presence is required, and operate unimpeded by restrictive sanctions.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Larson, *op.cit.* at note 7, p. 9.

18. Trost, *op. cit.* at note 9, p. 7.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Trost's statement goes to the heart of the Navy's perspective when it considers its own utility, and the impact of naval arms control, in the uncertain world of the future. That is, the emphasis is on flexibility, on being ready to do whatever needs to be done against whatever adversary is threatening American or allied interests. Indeed, Admiral Trost changed the nature of the Navy's public discussion of the Maritime Strategy because he was concerned that options associated with the Strategy--such as attacking Soviet SSBNs, attacking the Soviet homeland, or opening up new fronts--were coming to be viewed as equivalent with the Strategy. He stressed instead that it calls on US national and theater commanders to utilize the Navy in whatever way circumstances indicate make the greatest sense. Its strategic guidelines do call on employing naval forces early and forward, but only if it *makes sense to do so*. Nothing should be automatic. Naval commanders should be ready to implement a multiplicity of options. For example, Trost asked in 1987:

We have assumed that in a war Soviet submarines would be tied down protecting their [missile submarine] bastions. But this Spring [of 1987], we have seen for the second time a major deployment of Soviet attack submarines into the Atlantic. Clearly, the SSN "flush"...is an option [for the Soviets]. Could such an action precede not only the commencement of

hostilities but the forward deployment of our own forces?<sup>20</sup>

In such circumstances, Trost's advice within the Joint Chiefs of Staff might well include limiting the number of US naval assets far forward as long as the immediate threat in the sea lanes was substantial.<sup>21</sup>

Under Trost, furthermore, the discussion of the Maritime Strategy has taken on a broader context. Before his accession as CNO, it essentially focussed on one contingency: global conventional war with the USSR. Today there is a much greater emphasis on thinking about the spectrum of conflict below the level of general war and in circumstances where the USSR may not necessarily be directly involved.

In short, the modifications made to the Maritime Strategy in the last three or so years provide ample evidence that a concern for flexibility is a central feature of the US Navy's perspective when contemplating the future. The Navy's leadership is sensitive to the changing strategic landscape and to all the uncertainties that change portends, and it expects that US maritime forces will remain, in most cases, the principal instruments of choice should American political leaders decide that resort to military power is relevant. Hence it is convinced that the Navy cannot be fettered by regulations which limit its makeup or materially

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20. Trost, "Strategic Options: Bringing Down the Bird of Thought," Speech delivered at the Current Strategy Forum, US Naval War College, Newport, RI, 18 June 1987, p. 5.

21. See *ibid.*, p. 7.

restrict its deployment. It must remain flexible, and potential adversaries must know that. They must know that, if it needs to be used, it will be.

The Navy accepts that it's position leaves little scope for its presently supporting naval arms control measures, but they also point out that the US Navy readily accedes and abide by "sound agreements that result in an increased measure of stability, but do not impinge on any nation's free use of the high seas."<sup>22</sup> American spokesmen consistently single out three negotiated agreements: the 1972 accord with the USSR to prevent incidents at sea, the 1986 Stockholm Accord dealing with prior notification and observation of military activities, and the recently signed US and Soviet agreement to prevent dangerous military incidents.

In the Incidents-at-Sea agreement the superpowers established both a system of rules for how their naval forces would behave when in vicinity of other and a system of signals for communicating with each other when operating in close proximity. The accord also provides for an annual review process should incidents occur. The agreement has been particularly successful in substantially reducing the number of incidents between the two navies and has served as a model for bilateral agreements concluded between the Soviets and other western states. Of note, though, is the consistent American refusal in the interest

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22. *Trost, op.cit.* at note 9, pp. 5-6.

of operational flexibility to accede to Soviet demands that the agreement incorporate minimum standoff distances between units.

The Stockholm Accord's confidence-building measures include providing advanced notification of military maneuvers involving, among other things, at least 13000 troops, or 300 battle tanks, or 3000 troops landing in amphibious exercises, or a parachute drop involving 3000 or more troops. There are notification provisions also involve ship-to-shore gunfire and other ship-to-shore support. Exercises involving more than 17000 troops or 5000 amphibious or airborne troops are also subject to observation. The US accepts these provisions as they apply to naval or amphibious forces because "it is actually the land exercise being reported and the supporting naval forces involved are functionally linked [to it]".<sup>23</sup>

In the 1989 Agreement to Prevent Dangerous Military Incidents, the US and the Soviets agreed on restrictions of activities likely to lead to serious incidents. Specifically, such activities included:

- entry by personnel and equipment of armed forces of one Party into the national territory of the other Party through force majeure or unintentionally;
- causing harm to personnel or equipment through the use of lasers,

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23. Larson, *op.cit.* at note 7, p. 20.

- hampering the activities of other Party in a mutually agreed Special Caution Area, and
- interfering with Command and Control networks.

Both powers also agreed to take measures to terminate such incidents expeditiously when they did occur.

In addition to the above the United States adheres to international provisions on the issuance of Notices to Mariners and to Airmen. These constitute a reporting of activities which could hinder navigation or pose a hazard to ships or aircraft transiting an area. The USA also supports the Latin America nuclear free zone as well as similar zones in Space, in Antarctica, and on the Seabed. It does so in the interest of non-proliferation. It has not to date, however, supported similar zones for Europe, viewing such zones in that area to be incompatible with provisions for the defense of the NATO countries.

As far entering into negotiations on naval controls in the future, then Vice-Admiral Charles Larson did identify one area when he testified before Congress in April 1989. He stated that once there was a mutually agreed upon regime for land forces in Europe, "then the Western allies can examine the possibility of limitations on naval forces as they would affect the European balance of military power."<sup>24</sup>

In his Leningrad speech, furthermore, Admiral Trost foresaw that the CSBM negotiations will expand on the

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24. *Ibid.*, p.6.

Stockholm Agreement provisions relating to naval activities which "are functionally linked to operations on land."<sup>25</sup> His addition of the qualifier was intended, though, to reinforce the view that proposed measures which sought to regulate independent naval operations were outside the mandate of the negotiations and unacceptable to the US.

#### CONCLUSIONS

For other than ballistic missile submarines, the US presently remains opposed to any provisions to limit the size or makeup of its Navy. It also opposes restrictions on independent naval operations not functionally linked to land activities. With START (and SALT as well) and with the Incidents at Sea Agreement, the Agreement to Prevent Dangerous Military Activities, the 1986 Stockholm Agreement on Confidence-building Measures, and the Agreement on a Latin America Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, the United States has exhibited its willingness, however, to enter into agreements it deems consistent with its national and allied interests. It is also indicated its willingness to address the issue of naval measures that would affect the European balance of military power after a regime for land forces has been agreed upon. In addition, through ship visits and visits between high level naval officials (particularly the chiefs of naval staff), it has bilaterally undertaken with

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25. *Trost, op.cit.* at note 9, p. 5.

the Soviet Union measures which many regard as contributing to confidence-building.

It is worth pointing out, in addition, that for budgetary and other reasons US Navy force levels will drop 25% in the 1990s. The US Navy has also recently decided to phase out older tactical nuclear weapons from most of its ships, mainly because of obsolescence or lack of tactical utility. There are currently no prospects that replacements will be developed.

Budgetary pressures, smaller force numbers, and concern for the morale of naval personnel will almost surely lead to reductions in forward operations. Large US naval exercises in northern waters, never frequent to begin with, will probably be even less frequent in the future. The "drug war" may cause an increase in naval activities in waters off the Americas, especially the Caribbean area, and that increase may well come at the expense of a reduced presence in more distant waters. These factors plus the changed climate between the superpowers probably also means a scaling down in the number and scope of large, highly visible, naval exercises.

It appears unlikely that the US will soon significantly alter its stance on arms control at sea. The US will always be heavily reliant on seaborne trade, be separated from friends and allies by the oceans, and have important economic and political interests throughout the world and not just the northern region. An important capability to



defending these interests resides in maritime strength. Anything that significantly detracts from or inhibits appropriate use of that power will be probably rejected by American administrations now and in the future.

#### POSTSCRIPT

The above remarks were written in the Autumn of 1989. From then to now (Summer 1990) several noteworthy developments have occurred. One is that the Malta Summit did take place, and President Gorbachev did raise the issue of naval arms control. At a joint news conference reporters asked President Bush for his reaction. In response to one question dealing with naval arms control in general, the President replied:

We still have differences with the Soviet Union.

[President Gorbachev] knows it and I know it as it relates to naval forces....[W]e talked about a wide array of these issues, but we have no agreement at all on that particular question of naval arms control. But the point is, he knows that and I know that.<sup>26</sup>

Concerning a question on naval arms control in the Mediterranean, he sounded the same theme: "The Chairman [Gorbachev] raised the question of naval arms control and I was not particularly positive on naval arms control."

The strength of White House feeling on the issue is further reflected in its March 1990 Report on the National Security Strategy of the United States. There the White

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26. "Text of Bush-Gorbachev News Conference on Malta Meeting," *The New York Times*, 4 December 1989, p. A12.

House heralded its commitment to East-West arms control in the areas of strategic arms, defense and space, conventional forces in Europe, chemical weapons, open skies, CSBMs in Europe, nuclear testing, and chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons proliferation. The report then specifically noted only one area of East-West arms control in which the US would not enter--i.e., negotiations on limiting general purpose naval forces.<sup>27</sup>

Such statements make clear the degree to which the US position is a national vice just or principally the US Navy's position.

As concerns non-strategic nuclear weapons, the American and Soviet Presidents agreed at the May 1990 Washington summit that SLCMs will remain outside of START, that each side will have no more than 880 deployed nuclear SLCMs, that each side will annually make unilateral declarations regarding planned deployments, that those declarations will be politically binding, and that neither side will develop SLCMs with MIRVed warheads. In addition, both sides "reaffirmed their 1987 Washington joint summit statement to continue to seek 'mutually acceptable and effective methods of verification.'"<sup>28</sup>

Two weeks before the above appeared the US CNO, Admiral Trost, testified in response to a question at a Congressional sub-committee meeting that it could be in the

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27. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (the White House, March 1990), pp. 16-18.

28. May 1990 Washington Summit Joint Communique.

US interest to enter into negotiations with the Soviets on non-strategic nuclear weapons, but he emphasized that this would be so only "[i]f we could, with proper confidence in their willingness to abide by an agreement, be assured that there were no nuclear weapons that threatened either side's ships at sea...."<sup>29</sup> Trost called for strict verification and for an agreement which would apply to Soviet land-based air-delivered anti-ship weapons and to short-range nuclear anti-ship missiles at sea. He pointed out that "Soviet overtures to discuss naval nuclear weapons were usually targeted to win limits on US long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles, while excluding the short-range nuclear missiles predominant in the Soviet fleet."

Finally, the US approach to naval arms control in the future may be less tied to the US-Soviet military relationship, and tied more to the need to maintain the flexibility of naval forces to deal with regional contingencies in which the Soviets may not be involved as adversaries. US thinking concerning maritime strategy in the 1990s is strongly in the direction of the Navy as a general foreign policy instrument vice an instrument developed and geared to take on the Soviet Navy in a major war. The ongoing crisis in the Persian Gulf strongly reinforces this trend in thinking. Such a change in viewpoint may well impact American willingness to enter into

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29. Patrick Tyler, "Top Admiral Sees Talks on Sea Arms Possible," *Washington Post*, 12 May 1990, p. 12.

negotiated naval arms control, but it is best at this time to avoid speculation as to what that impact may be.